to develop small and medium towns so that they can act as counter magnets and reduce the migrations to the major cities.

Strengthening of Public Distribution system in States and Union Territories

2269. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to strengthen public distribution system in States and Union Territories during the Seventh Five Year Plan, particularly in States affected by drought or flood;

(b) if so, steps taken to increase the number of Fair Price Shops and ensure adequate provisions of essential commodities in States;

(c) whether consumer cooperatives have also been involved in the process; if so, the nature of involvement in detail; and

(d) how far their involvement has helped the public, Government, as well as the States/Union Territories?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Central Government has assumed responsibility for procurement and supply of seven essential commodities, namely, rice, wheat, levy sugar, imported edible oils, kerosene, soft coke and controlled cloth through the Public Distribution system. The responsibility for distribution of these items through the network of fair price shops vests with the State Governments/UT Administrations. With a view to ensuring that these items are brought within the reach of the common man, States/UTs have been advised from time to time to men more fair price shops. It has also been suggested to States/UTs to introduce mobile vans to cover the hilly, remote, far-flung, desert tribal and inaccessible areas. Accordingly, there are about 3.47 lakh fair price shops in the country. Since August, 1987, 7736 additional FPS have been opened in drought/flood affected areas and 357 mobile vans were introduced for selling essential commodities to the people in these areas.

(c) and (d) All State Governments/UTs have been advised to give preference to Consumer Cooperatives for opening fair price shops. About 28 per cent of the fair price shops in the country are run by the cooperatives. Central Government also provides financial assistance through the State Governments to consumer cooperative societies for setting up of new retail outlets for distribution of consumer goods. In the rural areas the primary agricultural credit societies are provided financial assistance under a Centrly Sponsored Scheme for undertaking the distribution of essential consumer goods.

Gap Between Estimated and Actual Production and Procurement of Wheat and Rice

2270. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that there was a huge gap between the estimated and actual production and procurement of wheat and rice during the Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans till date and the targets fixed were not achieved;

(b) if so, to what extent the targets were achieved and the reasons for shortfall, if any; and

(c) the remedial steps Government propose to take to prevent such shortfalls in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): a) and (b) The table below gives the targets and estimates of production of wheat and rice as at the end of the